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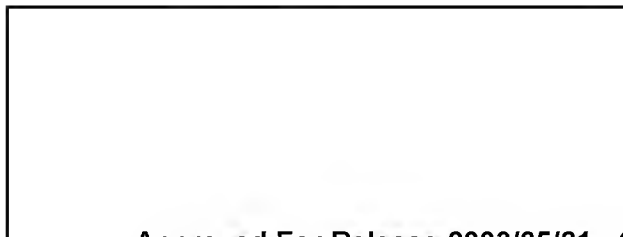
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CHILE--A Review of Recent Political Developments
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CHILE--A Review of Recent Political Developments

President Allende and his quarreling coalition partners are engaged in a prolonged reappraisal of their relationships and their progress in creating a socialist system through democratic institutions. Leaders of the seven parties of the Popular Unity (UP) coalition have been meeting for over a week in search of a new modus operandi. The question is how to consolidate and extend the "revolution" in the face of growing disunity in the coalition and a stronger challenge from the opposition.

Allende has participated on several occasions in this effort to overcome the stubborn conflicts that have dogged the coalition since it was put together in preparation for the 1970 presidential election. He has admitted that his government lacks majority support, but he blames this on the refusal of the coalition parties to work together to make the experiment succeed. Allende was conciliatory, agreeing to adopt drastic measures if all the UP settled on that policy, but he made clear his own preference for a moderate course of consolidation of the socialist program already well in motion. He told the politicians to settle their differences this week so that he could reorganize his cabinet.

The Communists and Socialists, the major partners and the major adversaries within the coalition, have dominated the discussions, backed by their sycophants among the smaller parties. The Communists insist on the need for caution, non-violence, compromise, and consolidation--particularly in the economic field. They are usually supported by the Radicals and Social Democrats, who merged into one party this week, as well as by another minuscule non-Marxist group. The Socialists, on the other hand, want a much faster pace in overturning the legal and economic ground rules that keep the opposition alive. They argue that armed confrontation is inevitable, that UP forces must prepare for it, and that a "reformist" approach is self-defeating. Two rival breakaway factions of the Christian Democrats line up with the Socialists.

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The deepening dispute between the coalition partners has focused increasingly on their respective attitudes toward the most important far left-ist force outside the coalition, the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR). The MIR's disruptive activities have been a provocation to rightist groups and an irritant to the military who, the Communists fear, may react by attempting a coup. The Communists are even more sensitive to the MIR's assumption of the role of champion of the lower classes, a group the Communists fear they have lost because of their identification with a government that has made more promises than it can fulfill. The Communists also see the MIR as a potent weapon that is used against them by Socialist leftwingers who sponsored the revolutionary group.

The Communists' determination to curb this threat was tested in mid-May after the MIR demonstrated in Concepcion in defiance of an official ban. The Socialists and their UP colleagues joined the MIR in blaming the Communists for police action and resulting violence. The Communists seized on this incident and the widespread tension over fear of violence to press their point in the UP that the MIR had gone too far. Internal differences within the Socialist Party forced its leader, Carlos Altamirano, to make a lukewarm disavowal of MIR excesses.

The perpetually disorganized Socialist Party, although it boasts Allende as a member and has been the largest votegetter in the coalition, is now significantly weakened by innumerable other divisive personal rivalries and the taint of corruption. Allende is unpopular with most of its leaders. They do not believe he shares the party's most unifying sentiment, its resistance to Communist domination of the different forms of political cooperation that have linked the two parties for 20 years. Altamirano's decision to make a tactical retreat on the MIR rather than risk a showdown with the disciplined Communists is not popular among fellow extremists in his party. As a quid pro quo, however, he may have gained Communist acquiescence in the

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plebiscite he wants on some key issues as a means of proving the government's popularity and giving it new momentum.

For Allende, conflict between the two Marxist parties has given him opportunities to play his favorite role as the ultimate arbiter of political power in Chile. For a more effective government, he needs an end to their conflict, but he recognizes that their strongest point of agreement is that they must act in concert to control him.

Meanwhile, the Christian Democrats plug away at the difficult job of coordinating the spreading but disparate opposition. They have few effective weapons against a government that is powerful despite its weaknesses, and their abhorrence of becoming identified with conservative political forces further limits their effectiveness. The military services, increasingly disturbed by the excesses of the government that is their responsibility to uphold, are trying unobtrusively to moderate its direction. Allende's tendency is to defer to some of their demands, but the Communists and Socialists so far have found ways to block most military influence. Nevertheless, Allende harbors the hope of bringing more military officers into his cabinet.

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